DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 377 445 CS 011 907

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TITLE The Integrated Spelling Curriculum.
PUB DATE 94
NOTE 13p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Integrated Activities; *Integrated Curriculum; Primary Education; *Spelling; Writing (Composition); *Writing Exercises; *Writing Instruction; Written Language
IDENTIFIERS Spelling Growth

ABSTRACT

The traditional spelling curriculum emphasized that pupils learn to spell a specific set of words through memorization. However, major problems existed pertaining to using that method of teaching. Pupils soon forgot the correct spelling of memorized words. Educational psychologists have long advocated that pupils perceive knowledge as being related, rather than isolated. Thus spelling needs to be stressed as the writing need evolves. There are numerous ways of implementing a functional philosophy of teaching spelling. Teachers, for instance, might guide their students in writing business letters (not to be graded) to be to mailed for a real purpose. Letters could be composed by individual students or by groups of students. This exercise would not only familiarize the students with the form of the letter but also help them realize that writing accomplishes a purpose--and that purpose may not be accomplished if their writing cannot be understood because of misspelled words. Students might also write friendly letters to each other; or they might brainstorm together to compose an announcement to be sent to their parents. Writing poetry or folklore or composing a class dictionary are also possibilities and offer the same opportunities for learning the importance of correct spelling. (TB)

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1994

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

THE INTEGRATED SPELLING CURRICULUM

The traditional spelling curriculum emphasized that pupils learn to spell a specific set of words through memorization. Major problems existed pertaining to using that method of teaching. Pupils soon forgot the correct spelling of memorized words. There was little transfer, if any, form memorizing to the functional use of the new word. Also, learners tended to lose interest in learning due to repetitious methods of learning. Meaning was lacking since isolated words were being stressed in spelling. Using newly learned words in spelling was not emphasized in teaching and learning. Purpose in acquiring the correct spelling of words cannot be attained through the use of memoriter methods of instruction. How is spelling taught in an integrated curriculum?

Relationship of Content

Educational psychologists have long advocated that pupils perceive knowledge as being related, rather than isolated. Correct spelling of words is inherent in writing for a variety of purposes, be it practical or creative writing. Thus spelling needs to be stressed as the writing need evolves, not in teaching spelling with an isolated list of words to be mastered by the pupil. There are numerous ways of implementing a functional philosophy of teaching spelling.

The teacher may assist pupils in spelling when a letter, card, or notice is written. At the time a pupil cannot spell a word correctly In proofing, the teacher provides needed help in spelling. Thus within a functional situation does the teacher provide guidance. A predetermined list of words to master does not provide the learner with the knowledge and skills necessary. Why not? The pupil does not know days, weeks, and even months ahead which words will be used in writing content, let alone knowing the words that he/ she will misspell. Within context in the holistic writing experience, the pupil can notice which words are not spelled correctly and these incorrectly spelled words can be changed to that which is correct. Making sense out of what is being learned is much more possible when the pupil notices the words that need to be spelled

correctly. Understanding why something is being learned is important; trivia and the irrelevant should be eliminated form the pupil's curriculum. The learner needs to accept that which has relevancy and is salient. The concepts of relevancy and saliency become inherent when the pupil is actually doing the writing of subject mater perceived to be important. In other words, each pupil should be guided to perceive purpose in learning. Perceiving the correct spelling of words as being important is an important learning. Word processors have spell check to catch incorrectly spelled words. However, one needs to be close enough to the correct spelling of a word or spell check, as a computer program, can give little or no assistance. Even the the case of homonyms, The pupil needs to select the correct word, be it here or hear as examples, or the spell check program on a computer will not catch the error in usage. The way the spelling curriculum is viewed has changed much since lists of words were to be mastered by pupils in a manner separated from their functional use, but the need to be a good speller has not changed. A person may not have access to a word processor at a given time. Or the word processor is not working properly. It almost appears to be imperative, at least at the present time, for each pupil to become a good speller. Young learners, in particular, cannot effectively use the key board of a word processor. Therefore, each youngster should master as many important words in spelling as possible.

There are numerous writing experiences in which pupils can learn to spell vital words correctly. Which activities are then available to pupils?

Writing Business Letters

There are numerous occasions in which pupils write business letters. I believe that there are ample addresses for pupils to write to in order that purposeful teaching materials, directly related to a unit of study, may be secured. These materials may then be used in teaching - learning situations. The business letters are mailed in the context of the present ongoing unit of study. There is purpose or reasons for writing the business letter and that being to secure necessary illustrations,

charts, and graphs. The business letter is not written for the teacher to grade and return to the pupil, but to obtain what is needed.
The pupil individually or within a committee writes the letter. The teacher guides learners to put in necessary information such as who the letter is to be sent to. Thus an appropriate inside address ins needed in the letter. What section of the business letter emphasizes the body of body of content necessary for the receiver of the letter to know what the sender wants or desires. Clarity is a salient concept here. The receiver wants to be sure that the contents is understood and not vague and hazy. The ordered materials might then be sent to the letter writer(s). When section of the business letter pertains to the date of sending the letter. Should there be an error in when the receiver receives the letter due to mailing service problems, the receiver might wish to check if the sender of the letter still wishes to receive materials ordered. For example, letters have been lost in the mail for years before reaching its destination. Does the sender still want the ordered materials in cases such as these? The where part of the business letter empathizes the place the materials are to be sent to that were ordered. This section is in the heading of the business letter. A proper greeting is always salient in a business letter such as "Dear Sir." The closing such s "Yours truly" and the signature of the sender also must appear on and in the business letter. There are many words that pupils can learn to spell correctly in writing a business letter. Careful proofing of each business letter before mailing is a necessity.

In writing a friendly letter, pupils can exchange these written letters with each other. The friendly letter may also be mailed. The actual mailing should not be required of pupils due to cost involved. However, selected pupils may wish to do so. The friendly letter has the same parts as does the business letter except for the inside address which is omitted. Thus the friendly letter should have the following essential parts:

(Heading)
June 1, 19—

(Greeting)
Dear Bob,

(Body) Here, the message to be communicated to the receiver of the friendly letter is to be written.

(Closing)
Your friend,

(Signature)
Alex

Writing experiences should be useful for learners in that what is learned has utilitarian values. What is learned is not memorized for its own sake or for testing but can be applied. Writing business and friendly letters is useful in the societal arenas. Communication results here between sender an receiver. The communication must be meaningful and understandable. The receiver needs to attach meaning then to what the sender has communicated with the use of abstract symbols. He/she decodes content in the letter. Decoding involves being knowledgeable of abstract symbols in the written communique. The sender must encode accurately so that the receiver of the message may decode in an understandable manner. Conformity is involved in adhering to an accepted model in the writing of business and friendly letters. Creatively is inherent when communicating ideas in the abstract using letters of the alphabet in proper sequence to make for words, phrases, and sentences. Quality sequence in sentences is also necessary. Correct spelling of words becomes a major objective in writing since quality communication demands that each word be spelled correctly. Peers may assist each other as well as teacher involvement to spell words correctly in the final form of the letter which is to be mailed.

Writing Announcements

There are numerous occasions when pupils need to write an

announcement. The teacher should guide pupils to write announcements for open house, parent- teacher organization meetings, as well as for other salient notices. For each announcement, the teacher should assist learners to realize the salient ideas needed within each announcement. Pupils could also brainstorm that should is necessary to go into an announcement. I have supervised student- teaches i the public schools for thirty years and one student- teacher and cooperative teacher had pupils brainstorm that which should go into an announcement. A model announcement printed on the chalkboard was discussed as to its meaning prior to the brainstorming experience.

After the brainstorming activity, learners had come up with the same content as to the announcement subject matter as did the language arts textbook being used in class. I truly believe that pupils remember content better if they have understood a model announcement and inductively arrived at its contents than if learners had studied the announcement in the text and memorized its contents. Memorizing tends to be a dull activity for pupils whereas brainstorming has its excitement with no ideas duplicated when presented by learners. Higher levels of cognition are involved when pupils keep presenting ideas, and in this case what goes into an announcement, without repetition of previously presented content. Pupils came up with the following as to what goes into an announcement from the brainstorming activity:

1. What the event is all about. When using the brainstormed model, pupils wrote about an actual parent- teacher organization (PTO) meeting and what will be stressed at this meeting.

2. When the event will take place. The PTO meeting will be held October 10, 19—.

3. Where the event will take place. The PTO meeting will be held at Greenwood School, at the intersection of Normal and Halliburton Street, Kirksville, Missouri.

4. Why the meeting will take place. During the meeting, the purchasing of new playground equipment will be discussed.

5. Services provided in that baby sitting assistance will be available as well as refreshments for all.

If pupils have ample opportunities to assist in writing an announcement to take home to their parents, they should achieve well in this area. The writing activity is life- like and real. The writing experience is functional and utilitarian. The announcement is not written for the teacher to grade and return to the writer(s), but rather there is a purpose in writing the announcement and that purpose being to inform parents of an important meeting. Much spelling in its correct form is stressed in writing the announcement. In its final form, a quality announcement must be sent home to parents.

Writing Poetry

There are numerous types of poems for pupils to write. Creativity is an ultimate goal to emphasize in the writing of poetry. Novelty, uniqueness, originality, and newness are salient concepts to stress in the writing of poems. The poems that pupils write can have rhyme such as the following:

1. couplets containing two lines with ending words rhyming.
2. triplets containing three lines with all ending words rhyming.
3. quatrains containing four lines with all ending words rhyming or lines one and two as well as lines three and four rhyming.
4. limericks with lines one, two, and five rhyming as well as lines three and four rhyming.

pupils may wish to write unrhymed verse such as those having a certain number of syllables per line such as

1. haiku in which line one has five syllables, line two has seven syllables, and line five has five syllables.
2. tanka in which there are five, seven, five, seven, and seven syllables for each of five lines respectively of the poem.

Many pupils like to write free verse where rhyme and syllabication are not stressed. There are no rules governing how long a free verse should be. It is indeed an open ended kind of poetry to write. Quickly, one can see all the opportunities for pupils to learn to spell words

correctly in context when proofing the final product. The reason for emphasizing the final product as a relevant place for proofing is that pupil's trend of thought should not be interrupted. Ideas always come first in any written product. Never should the correct spelling of words interfere with the free flow of ideas be it in poetry or other forms of writing. Pupils may use inventive spelling when they are writing and the free flow of ideas remains on a continuum. The final product in poetry writing presents innumerable opportunities for learners to spell words correctly. a purpose exists in the correct spelling of words on poetry writing and that purpose is to communicate effectively with others.

Developing a Dictionary

I have noticed in many classrooms that I have visited that teachers guide pupils in making dictionaries. A functional dictionary of useful terms can be made from numerous social studies, science, mathematics, and literature units studied. Thus geographical terms in a social studies unit being studied can make for an excellent, useful dictionary of terms being studied. If learners forget the meaning of a vocabulary term, they may use their very own dictionaries made in class to find a definition. Words can be added as the unit of study progresses. For each new unit studied, a dictionary can be made. Careful attention must be given to providing meaningful definitions as well as having each word correctly spelled and alphabetized. These dictionaries can be made on an individual or committee basis. Illustrations can be added when available for each vocabulary term. Attractive covers can be made for each dictionary completed for a specific unit of study. I believe this is a good way of stressing a holistic approach in the teaching of spelling. Here, spelling is not an isolated curriculum area, but a part of a larger whole such as the integrated language arts curriculum. Spelling is practical and useful, not an isolated curriculum area.

Experience Charts

Many primary grade teachers stress developing of experience charts with pupils. The contents for young children can come from an

excursion or story listened as read by the teacher. In sequence, learners in large group or committee settings present ideas from the experience to the teacher who in return prints the related content on the chalkboard using neat, large manuscript letters. This is followed by learners reading the content orally as the teacher points to words and phrases as the activity progresses. Learners then listen, speak, read, and write (pupils see the teacher writing ideas presented on the chalkboard). Each experience chart can be filed and bound for future classroom use.

When pupils can do their very own writing, they should do so. Learners need to become as independent as possible. Each pupil here may file and bind their personally developed experience chart.

Correct spelling of each word is important in the final copy for each experience chart. Spelling errors may be corrected on an individual or committee basis. Learners can receive much practice in spelling by identifying and correcting that which is incorrect.

Writing Folklore

Folklore written may be related to a social studies or science unit being taught presently. Holism in spelling needs to stress emphasizing what is incorrect to that which is correct. There are diverse kinds of folklore to write in which learners may learn to spell numerous new words. The diverse kinds of folklore to write include the following:

1. legends in which an actual person, usually from the past in historical time, is made to appear as a supernatural being. What is ascribed to the legendary person in terms of traits emphasizes the ability to transcend nature, such as supernatural traits pertaining to Davy Crockett.

2. tall tales in which the individual(s) therein are not real persons, but also have supernatural tendencies. Paul Bunyan and Pecos Bill are leading individuals portrayed in tall tales.

3. myths which attempt to explain causes for happenings such as the creation of the universe, why an animal has a tail or spots, or why shadows are cast. These explanations do not have any scientific basis.

4. fables which possess morals, such as the maiden with a pail of milk on her head. She fell and the milk spilled on the ground. Prior to the milk spilling, the maid had wanted to become wealthy from selling the milk an buying chicks. With the selling of the grown chicks (roosters and hens), she would continually invest in and sell chickens until the wealth was there. This story has the common moral — "Don't count your chicks until they are hatched."

5. Additional folklore includes fairy tales and folk tales of different nations on the face of the earth.

With the writing of folklore, pupils enjoy creative writing experiences in an integrated spelling curriculum. There are many opportunities here for the learner to master the correct spelling of words with the concept of "holism" involved. Learning to spell words can be an enjoyable experience for all pupils. Accuracy in spelling is a vital skill for pupils to attain and should be acquired as the need arises, not in an isolated area of the curriculum. Functional, enjoyable activities are in the offing for pupils. The teacher can think of a variety of experiences which will aid the learner to become a quality speller within the framework of a holistic curriculum.

Additional Spelling Opportunities

There are numerous other activities which will assist the pupil to do well in spelling. These include the writing of

1. outlines and summaries.
2. dramas and holiday greeting messages.
3. invitations and classroom newspapers.
4. journals and diaries.
5. log entries for an ongoing unit of study.

Each of the above named writing experiences contain tasks involving the correct spelling of words. Pupils worth teacher guidance should avail themselves of the opportunity to learn to spell words correctly within the framework of a holistic curriculum.

Use of the Basal Spelling Textbook

Many teachers have asked me about my thinking on the use of basal spelling textbooks in teaching- learning situations. I recommend their use if the following conditions are met:

1. the spelling text has been carefully selected by a committee of teachers dedicated to improving the curriculum.
2. thee texts assist pupils to attain relevant goals in writing across the curriculum.
3. the spelling words contained therein have been chosen on the basis of being frequently used by learners.
4. activities in the manual section provide worthwhile suggestions for teaching which guide pupils in using each word i a holistic writing situation.
5. the words listed for each lesson are new to the learner and yet capable of being mastered by the pupil.
6. direct application of the spelling words can be made by learners in a variety of kinds of writing experiences. Knowledge used will not be forgotten as soon as what is not used.
7. interest in spelling is fostered by the use of the spelling texts. Learners need to be actively engaged on the learning process, not passive receivers of information and skills.
8. motivation for learning is apparent when using the spelling textbooks. Motivated pupils tend to attain more than the unmotivated.
9. purpose for learning to spell words correctly seems to be in the offing in the chosen spelling text since commonly used words are there for pupils to master.
10. sequence in learning to spell words correctly appears to be adequate when appraising the sequential lessons in the text.

Use of spelling textbooks have a definite role in the school setting. Certainly these books can assist learners with a variety of activities to become better spellers. However, the spelling textbook is only one source for pupils to acquire in spelling. Better it is to integrated listed

spelling words in the text and their application in writing for a variety of purposes. Holism is to be recommended in the spelling curriculum with other academic areas.

In Closing

Pupils spelling words in isolation to develop proficiency to spell words correctly is generally outdated. Rather a more holistic approach in the spelling curriculum is recommended. There are numerous practical and creative writing activities in which learners may master the correct spelling of words. Thus within contexts, learners practice spelling in ongoing writing experiences as well as in proofing the final product of written work.

Diverse types of writing that permit pupils to achieve a rich spelling vocabulary include the writing of business and friendly letters, announcements, poetry, dictionaries, experience charts, and folklore, among others. Spelling textbooks have their uses within the framework of wholeness and in a contextual writing situation. A very variety of rich learning activities should be in the offing for each pupil so that the end result is to develop good spellers in school and in society.